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Teresa Allport
Headteacher
Brierley Hill Primary School
Mill Street
Brierley Hill
DY5 2TD

Dear Mrs Allport

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brierley Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that the school improvement plan contains measurable success criteria related to the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils, so that governors can check the impact of actions within the plan.
- improve the way that leaders use information about pupils' achievement in order to identify the precise actions teachers should take to accelerate the progress of different ability groups.
- urgently organise training and support to develop governors' independent understanding of information about pupils' achievement. This must include the school's use of pupil premium funding and the impact of this on the achievement of eligible pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Acting Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. HMI held a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body. A range of documentation was reviewed including feedback to staff following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work and the latest information about pupils' achievement. You and another senior leader joined HMI on brief visits to classrooms to review pupils' learning and talk to pupils. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection there has been a review of governance. The Chair of the Governing Body has recently resigned. A new Chair has been appointed. The governing body has been reconstituted.

Main findings

You and other senior leaders, including governors, share a determination that the school improves quickly and will be judged 'good' by the time of the next inspection. You have amended your school improvement plan to include all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The plan includes suitable actions to improve the quality of teaching and the work of senior leaders. However, it does not include measurable success criteria related to the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils. As a result, the vision that you and the governing body have for the school, and the timescale within which you believe you can be judged 'good', is not clear. This makes it harder for senior leaders, including governors, to judge the school's progress. I will contact a school in Coventry, where similar issues have been resolved, with a view to making links between you and the other headteacher.

You and other senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' work. Your written feedback to teachers identifies successful practice and where further improvements are required. However, your feedback often consists of general comments and does not identify the precise actions teachers need to take to help different groups of pupils make faster progress. Senior leaders are still not clear enough about what teachers are doing to make learning challenging for all groups of pupils. This was identified as an area for improvement at your previous inspection in February 2014. At my next visit in autumn 2014, I will assess the progress that has been made in this particular aspect of your work.

You have taken effective actions to improve attendance. Pupils understand and value the new 'traffic light' system used to record behaviour, attendance and achievement. They appreciate the regular 1-1 meetings with teachers. Pupils value the rewards for good attendance. When compared to the same period last year,

attendance has improved. Your latest information shows that attendance is closer to the national average for primary schools.

There have been recent and very significant changes to the governing body. The new Chair of Governors meets with senior leaders weekly to review the school's progress. He recognises that governors need further training to help them to develop the skills needed to challenge the school's performance effectively. Governors have not yet established a robust system for checking the impact of actions taken on the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. This is partly because appropriate training for governors has not yet taken place. This is planned for November. HMI agrees with the Chair of Governors that this is too late and recommends that the local authority provide governors with training and support as soon as possible.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

In the past, the school has been categorised as 'light touch' by the local authority. Since the previous inspection in February 2014, the level of support provided by the local authority has not increased. Training and support for the governing body has not been organised rapidly enough. The local authority has brokered support for the school from a network of local schools. Other than that, you and your staff have been working by yourselves. Up to this point, external support has had little discernible impact on the work you have been doing to secure a 'good' judgement at your next inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector